



Summary

Newsletter

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Advisory Group

The Advisory Group is a key component of the National Centre and provides invaluable advice and input into its strategic direction on a range of issues. The Advisory Group is occasionally subject to change as people move from one position or department to another. Since the last newsletter there have been several changes to the members of the Group.

The current membership is:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Professor Graeme Hugo | Director, National Key Centre for Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems (GISCA) |
| Professor John Mangan | Professor of Economics, University of Queensland |
| Mr Richard Stayner | Principal Project Director, Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England |
| Ms Joan Armitage | Assistant Secretary, Regional Policy Services, Department of Transport and Regional Services |
| Dr Stephen Beare | Research Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics |
| Ms Jill Kurr | Director of Information and Communications, Office of Rural Health, Department of Health and Ageing |
| Mr Geoff Gook | Manager, Information, Analysis and Research Unit, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission |
| Ms Kate Kent | Director, Policy Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania |
| Ms Jeannie McLellan | Business Manager, Future Service Delivery, Centrelink |
| Ms Barbara Middleton | Assistant Director, Community Policy and Research Section, Community Branch, Department of Family and Community Services |
| Mr Ivan Neville | Director, Statistical Analysis Section, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business |
| Ms Dianne Peacock | Director, Participation and Learning Section, Analysis and Equity Branch, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs |
| Mr Garth Pitkethly | First Assistant Commissioner, Productivity Commission |
| Ms Liz Sinclair | Manager, Regional Policy, Department of State and Regional Development, Victoria |
| To be announced | Australian Local Government Association |
| To be announced | Social Services Centre, Bureau of Regional Sciences |

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Governance of the Rural and Regional Statistics Program

The Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre (RRSNC) has primary responsibility for determining ABS priorities with respect to rural and regional statistics, for developing the overall direction for regional statistics (via an Information Development Plan, a national regional profile, improved dissemination etc.) and for exploiting the administrative data holdings of federal agencies. In addition, every regional office has a Regional Statistics Unit that

carries out regional statistics projects within the State and Territory Statistical Service program for that state or territory.

While the National Centre has established an external Advisory Group to provide input into its work program, it has been decided to restructure its internal governance to ensure that the National Centre is better able to fulfil its role with respect to guiding overall ABS activity in regional statistics within subject matter areas across ABS offices.

A Program Board has been established chaired by the Deputy Statistician, Population Statistics Group, and has representation from the Economic Statistics Group, Methodology Division, Information Management Division and a Regional Office. It is anticipated that the Board will meet no more than twice per year.

It is expected that this arrangement will enable the National Centre to minimise the potential that exists for duplication of effort and to maximise the ability to pick up on important opportunities to improve the quality and breadth of regional statistics available to users.

The first meeting of the board took place on 15 May 2003. The major discussion points were the Rural and Regional Statistics Information Development Plan and a proposal to reshape the way in which regional statistics are disseminated via the ABS web site. Both of these issues are covered in more detail later in the newsletter.

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Information Development Plan

In the past few years the range of statistical information available from the ABS and other research agencies about regional Australia has improved. However, as a result of ongoing interest in regional issues and better understanding of the social, economic and environmental processes that impact on rural and regional areas, demand for regional data has continued to grow. A great deal of work is still required to provide the various types of regional data required by researchers in this field.

To better understand the key themes currently driving demand for rural and regional statistics and to identify the associated development activity needed to provide the data required by users, RRSNC is currently developing a Rural and Regional Statistics Information Development Plan (IDP).

The IDP will highlight the priority areas where statistical development is most needed. A thorough appreciation of existing demand for rural and regional data will be gained by identifying the primary current policy issues, the key users of regional information and the specific types of data required. The current supply of rural and regional data will then be assessed through a comprehensive summary of existing information. The results of these two processes will then be combined to identify information gaps and overlaps and thereby develop recommendations, based on an assessment of priorities, for required statistical development. While these recommendations will largely revolve around the development of specific information sources and items, the development of data frameworks and classifications will also be considered.

An extensive range of consultations will be undertaken with rural and regional researchers and policy agencies during the development of the IDP. It is currently planned that such consultations will take place in late 2003, with a final IDP released in 2004. Progress updates and additional information about the IDP will be provided in future RRSNC newsletters.

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Improved Dissemination of Regional Statistics

A primary objective of the Regional Statistics Program is to improve the breadth and quality of small area data available for policy evaluation and other community decision-making purposes. Part of this objective is achieved by ensuring that such data are highly visible to, and readily accessible by, users. While a range of regional and small area data is available on the ABS web site finding these is not particularly intuitive at times. Certainly access to output from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing is quite straightforward, however, regional data is tucked away under the Themes page button. If a user accesses the Themes page they are presented with a mixture of information but with no degree of certainty that all of the information they need at regional level has been located.

This is all about to change! The National Centre has established a working group to improve the visibility and coherence of regional data on the ABS web site. It is anticipated that features such as a regional statistics icon to access regional data directly will be added to the home page as well as access to specific regions from an interactive map of Australia or from a pick list.

In conjunction with this initiative the National Centre has commenced developing a National Regional Profile (NRP). This profile will contain a suite of key indicators at Statistical Local Area (SLA) and Local Government Area level for all of Australia. The NRP will enable consistent quantitative measurement, evaluation and comparison of the performance of regions. Initially the NRP will contain indicators that are readily available such as population and other demographic variables, some headline economic indicators and, where possible, a selection of social and environmental data items. Issues related to data availability, quality, consistency and comparability will need to be considered. It is anticipated that, over time, this suite of indicators will grow. The NRP will be available from the web site, initially in a fixed format report, with the area of choice being selected using drill-down map style functionality. The National Centre is working toward the NRP being available in early 2004.

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Regional Wage and Salary Earner Taxation Statistics

In the last newsletter we highlighted the availability of regional estimates from the wage and salary data contained within the Australian Taxation Office Individual Income Tax Return database.

The availability of intercensal measures of the number of wage and salary earners cross tabulated by variables such as sex, age, occupation and wage and salary income provides researchers with valuable measures of economic activity. To date, two publications have been released: **Information Paper, Use of Individual Income Tax Return Data for ABS Regional Statistics, Wage and Salary Indicators for Small Areas 1995-96 and 1996-97** (cat. no. 5673.0) and **Experimental Estimates, Regional Wage and Salary Earner Statistics, Australia, 1995-96 to 1998-99** (cat. no. 5673.0).

More recently the range of data has been extended to include total income received by wage and salary earners from all sources of income-wages and salary, business, investment, superannuation, government benefits, partnerships and trusts, etc. Such measures, in conjunction with other data, provide researchers with an indication of disposable income at small area level. All these data are available as tables from the ABS web site-tables 1-14 that extend from 1995-96 to 1999-2000.

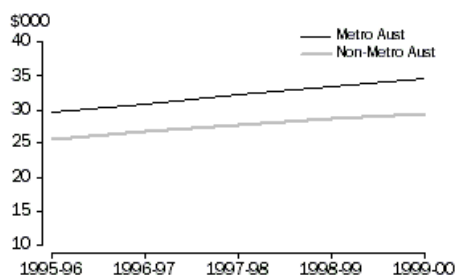
The tables are companion data to the publication **Experimental Estimates, Regional Wage and Salary Earner Statistics, Australia, 1995-96 to 1998-99** (cat. no. 5673.0). They contain information for all SLAs in Australia and can be down-loaded from the ABS web site at a reasonable price. If data for a single state or territory are required these can be arranged through a consultancy by contacting the RRSNC. For further information on this taxation project please contact Mark Nowosilskyj on 08 8237 7358 or mark.now@abs.gov.au.

An example of the comparative analyses that can be generated from these estimates is provided by the following table and graph. The table shows that the average Australian wage and salary income for wage and salary earners has risen from \$28,543 in 1995-96 to \$33,341 in 1999-2000 while the graph highlights the annual income differential between metropolitan and non-metropolitan Australia.

Average Wage and Salary Income, States and Territories, 1995-96 to 1999-2000

| | 1995-96 \$ | 1996-97 \$ | 1997-98 \$ | 1998-99 \$ | 1999-2000 \$ |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| NSW | 29,936 | 31,286 | 32,771 | 34,296 | 35,636 |
| Vic. | 28,733 | 29,881 | 30,992 | 32,157 | 33,347 |
| Qld | 26,537 | 27,704 | 28,728 | 29,965 | 30,775 |
| SA | 26,604 | 27,725 | 28,851 | 29,790 | 30,682 |
| WA | 28,109 | 29,449 | 30,626 | 31,606 | 32,269 |
| Tas. | 25,979 | 26,884 | 27,828 | 28,714 | 29,385 |
| NT | 28,214 | 29,677 | 30,754 | 33,367 | 33,903 |
| ACT | 33,417 | 34,320 | 35,244 | 36,690 | 37,886 |
| Aust. | 28,543 | 29,768 | 30,985 | 32,271 | 33,341 |
| Metro Aust. | 29,555 | 30,808 | 32,112 | 33,430 | 34,681 |
| Non-Metro | 25,609 | 26,747 | 27,711 | 28,822 | 29,389 |

Average Wage and Salary Income, Metropolitan and Non-metropolitan Australia, 1995-96 to 1999-2000



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Regional Small Business Taxation Statistics (data for 2000-01 soon to be released to the ABS web site)

For a number of years there has been interest from all levels of government for regional estimates of economic activity. In order to meet this need the ABS Queensland Office has been investigating using ATO data from companies, partnerships and trusts and individuals declaring business income.

In October 2002 the ABS released experimental estimates of regional business activity, derived from the ATO's business income data, in **Experimental Estimates, Regional Small Business Statistics, Australia** (cat no. 5675.0). The preliminary findings are presented for state and territory Statistical Divisions for the financial years

beginning 1995-96 and ending 1999–2000. Five standard tables providing more detailed data for 1995-96 to 1999-2000, are available on the ABS web site. Standard table 6, 'Wage and Salary Expenses by Industry Division by Statistical Divisions, 1995-96 to 1999-2001', will be released in July 2003. In addition 2000-01 data will also be made available on the ABS web site for the other standard tables in July 2003.

The standard tables are companion data to the publication **Experimental Estimates, Regional Small Business Statistics, 1995-96 to 1999-2000** (cat. no. 5675.0) which outlines the methodology used to produce, and caveats on the use of, these data.

Feedback from users on the data and explanations provided are welcomed. Please direct all comments and queries to Mark Chalmers in ABS Queensland Office on (07) 3222 6307, email mark.chalmers@abs.gov.au.

The business and personal regional income publications merely showcase the range of new regional economic data that are now available annually. To promote their availability further and to obtain feedback on their usefulness the ABS recently undertook a series of seminars around Australia. As feedback was unanimously positive, the ABS will continue with the production of these data on an annual basis.

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Regional Statistics Publications and Profiles

Regional Statistics Publications and Regional Profiles contain a wide range of data from both the ABS and other government agencies. Profiles are available for a range of geographic areas including Local Government Areas. The products are designed to facilitate analyses to support planning and development activities in regions and to meet a wide range of regional information needs.

The publications, **Regional Statistics** (cat. no. 1362.x series) are available for most states. For Victoria, data has been included in State and Regional Indicators, Victoria (cat. no. 1367.2). The profiles contain information on population, employment, education and training, health, agriculture, fisheries and forestry, mining, building and construction, finance and transport and tourism. They also contain time-series and selected region comparisons which compares summary data for the profiled area with other areas.

For further information about either the publications or the regional profiles, contact your local ABS Office or visit the ABS web site.

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Where can you find us?

To access our Theme Page, just enter the ABS web site at www.abs.gov.au and click on the 'Themes' button. Then select 'Regional Statistics' from the list. The Theme Page highlights the type and range of data that are available for regional or small area analyses across Australia. Details of recent ABS developments in regional statistics are also highlighted. Other contact details include :

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About this release

Welcome to this the third newsletter from the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre (RRSNC). This edition brings you up to date with some of the developments in the National Centre and outlines several statistical releases from our work program.

There have been some changes to our Advisory Group as well as to reporting arrangements internally within the ABS which will enhance our ability to influence internal programs with respect to regional data.

A major step forward is the development of an Information Development Plan for regional statistics to highlight the priority areas where statistical development is most needed. This plan will help focus the forward work program on areas that require the greatest attention.

We have recently appointed a Local Government Sector Account Manager to foster an improved relationship with local government clients. It is envisaged that the Manager will facilitate the delivery of better information and education solutions for councils and their staff.

The newsletter provides information on the latest releases with respect to our work with both personal and business income taxation data estimates. Much of these data are already available on the ABS web site.

We welcome suggestions and feedback on our endeavours and trust that you find the newsletter of interest. If you would like any further information on any of the items please contact the nominated person or use the contact details on the back page.

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